

IN IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 20-28 without prejudice or disclaimer. Please amend claims 1, 3, 10 and 15. Please add new claims 29 and 30:

The following is the status of the claims of the above-captioned application, as amended.

1. (Amended.) A method for tenderizing meat, said method comprising contacting meat with a tenderizing-effective amount of a thermolabile protease having limited substrate specificity, wherein said limited substrate specificity is the digestion of only one of the two major protein components of meat.

3. (Currently Amended.) A method as defined in claim [2] 1, wherein said protease is derived from a mammal.

4. (Original.) A method as defined in claim 3, wherein said mammal is bovine.

5. (Original.) A method as defined in claim 3, wherein said protease is chymosin.

6. (Original.) A method as defined in claim 5, wherein said protease is obtained from a recombinant host cell transformed with a nucleic acid encoding said protease.

7. (Original.) A method as defined in claim 3, wherein said meat after tenderization exhibits a relative shear force of between about 50% and about 90% of said meat prior to tenderization.

8. (Original.) A method as defined in claim 7, wherein said meat after tenderization exhibits a relative shear force of between about 60% and about 80% of said meat prior to tenderization.

9. (Original.) A method as defined in claim 3, wherein said contacting comprises injection or marination.

10. (Currently Amended.) A method as defined in claim [10] 1, further comprising tumbling said meat.

11. (Original.) A method as defined in claim 3, wherein said meat is contacted with said protease at a ratio of between about 0.001 and about 0.05 AU/g meat.

12. (Original.) A method as defined in claim 3, wherein said meat is selected from the group consisting of fresh meat, frozen meat, freeze-dried meat, and restructured meat.

13. (Original.) A tenderized meat product obtained using a method as defined in claim 1.

14. (Original.) A tenderized meat product obtained using a method as defined in claim 5.

15. (Amended.) A tenderizing meat composition comprising a tenderizing-effective amount of (i) a thermolabile protease having limited substrate specificity, wherein said limited substrate specificity is the digestion of only one of the two major protein components of meat, [and wherein said protease is derived from a mammal]; and (ii) one more flavoring agents.

16. (Canceled.)

18. (Original.) A composition as defined in claim 15, further comprising brine and/or a curing agent.

19. (Original.) A composition as defined in claim 15, wherein said flavoring agent is selected from the group consisting of herbs, spices, liquid smoke, and combinations of any of the foregoing.

20. (Cancelled.)

21. (Cancelled.)

22. (Cancelled.)

23. ((Cancelled.)

24. (Cancelled.)

25. (Canceled.)

26. (Canceled.)

27. (Canceled.)

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28. (Canceled.)

29. (New.) The method of claim 1, wherein the protease digest a myofibrillar protein.

30. (New.) The composition of claim 15, wherein the protease digest a myofibrillar protein.